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SUBJECT: GROUPS IN ANGOLA CALLING FOR EXTENDING VOTER
REGISTRATION PERIOD

REF: A. LUANDA 217

[1](#)B. LUANDA 163

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: With less than six weeks to the conclusion of the voter registration period on June 15 2007, opposition parties and other groups are publicly urging the government to extend the voter registration period, arguing that due to the poor road network and unusually heavy rainfall the majority of potential voters outside major cities and urban centers have not registered. While the quality of the registration process has uniformly been viewed favorably, the pace has slackened and rural voters have not yet been given the opportunity to register. The rainy season has made registration logistics more difficult and it is unclear that the GRA will be able to reach these rural voters in a timely manner. Extending the voter registration period by a several months would not jeopardize the possibility for a summer 2008 election, but given the lack of an election timetable, it could undermine the people's credibility in elections. End Summary.

June 15 Approaching too Quickly

[1](#)2. (SBU) What started as a call by minor opposition parties to extend elections, has now gained support of other more credible political parties and prominent individuals to extend the voter registration period, currently set to end on June 15, 2007. Beginning on April 13, 2007, the Council for Opposition Parties &CPO8 was the first to request that the government consider the possibility of extending the registration period until March 2008, to enable the yet to be accessed rural potential voter to register (NOTE: The CPO is a conglomeration of 35 small parties with no parliamentary representation nor any sign of commanding a potential electoral group. Their call to extend the registration period is also a thinly disguised opportunity to garner more funding. The GRA supported all parties, regardless of size, with funding for their monitoring activities (reftel B) and might be expected to provide additional funding were the election period to be extended. END NOTE).

[1](#)3. (U) In response to the CPO,s request the head of the Electoral Implementing Commission (CIPE), Virgilio de Fontes Perreira stated that the government believes the registration process is still on course, confirming that over 4 million of the 7.5 million estimated potential voters have been registered. The government plans on increasing the number of registration brigades from the current 381 to 509 making them available throughout the 164 municipalities that make up Angola,s local government districts. However, Perreira said that the government would not completely exclude the possibility of an extension, if by May 15, the numbers indicate the government is falling behind the estimated target. He reiterated that the government is still working

towards the goal of concluding the registration period on June 15.

¶4. (U) On April 19, Jorge Kengule, president of the AD-Coalition, a party with one seat in parliament advocated for a six month extension until December 2007. On April 21, FNLA interim president Ngola Kabangu called on the government to work with political parties to attain a consensus on the best date to conclude the voter registration period. On April 27, PRS Parliamentarian Bernardo Lindo Tito urged the government to extend the registration period, due to climatic and infrastructure delays. The MPLA's youth wing has also called for an extension, and others are jumping onto the extension bandwagon.

Process Getting High Marks, but Progress Slow

¶5. (SBU) Most independent groups and even the major opposition parties agree that the voter registration process has been conducted fairly. The National Platform NGO, which conducts registration monitoring recently released data summarizing its monitoring activities and gives the process high marks (septel). However, there is concern that at the current pace the government won't be able to reach all eligible voters by June 15. Unusually heavy rains have made deployment of registration brigades to rural areas outside either the provincial capitals or larger cities particularly difficult. Further, as the brigades go further outside the towns and cities, more of the working day will be consumed by transportation time than by actual registration hours, effectively limiting the brigades, productivity. In addition, the government hasn't provided a full schedule for registration brigade deployment to rural communities. Note: This is probably due to lack of capacity in logistics planning. However, the CIPE will need to plan to take advantage of the dry season. End note.

LUANDA 00000443 002 OF 002

Political Will

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: The minor opposition parties are particularly interested in extending the registration period in the hope of securing more funding from the government, given their USD 200,000 payment per party in early 2007 (reftel B). However, there are now a number of reasonable voices joining the chorus for extending the time frame. At the current pace, the government will not be able to reach all 7.5 estimated voters by June 15. While the CIPE has expanded hours and days for registration it still has not deployed the entire number of brigades (381 of 509) hired. In addition, despite its fully computerized registration system, the CIPE has released very few registration statistics in the last two months making it extremely difficult to track the campaign's progress, or lack thereof, across the provinces.

¶7. (SBU) Government and opposition alike agree that the full pool of eligible voters must be given an opportunity to register. The reason for the consensus is historical as many blame the renewed fighting after the 1992 elections on the fact that rural voters, thought to mostly support UNITA, were purposefully under-represented. NGO's and opposition groups are concerned, however, that a delay in registration could be used as an excuse to delay the elections and thus undermine voter confidence in the electoral process. There is general agreement that voter registration could be extended by several months without jeopardizing a summer 2008 election date, but it is unclear what a prolonged delay would do to the election's credibility. Local actors are trying to impress on the GRA that by prolonging the registration period without announcing an electoral timetable, it becomes almost impossible to maintain credibility in the eyes of potential voters and the international community. End Comment.

FERNANDEZ